

Pitfalls of Independent Language Learners

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8 December 2012

Today I want to discuss a few of the mistakes independent language learners can make. They come from my own experiences and the experiences of some of my penpals.

1. No Plan. Make a plan, and stick to it. It doesn't have to be a perfect plan. You can change it as you progress and as your needs and motivations change. Just do something! Remember, "A good plan executed today is better than a great plan executed at some indefinite point in the future" (General Patton).

2. Buying More Courses. Instead of just buying a new course that might help you get to your goal slightly faster, just focus on using the course you already have. Buying more courses just wastes your time and your money, clutters up your bookcase, and leaves you feeling defeated. Save your money, and use that time for advancing in your target language using a course you already have. It may not be a perfect course (and I believe no course is), but you should use the resources you already have.

3. Seeking A Short Cut. There are no short-cuts to language learning. You still have to put in the time to learn the language. Hard work will get you there, but it will go better for you if you can have some fun at the same time. Try some different activities, and choose a few of the most fun activities to do weekly to carry you onward in your language learning journey.

4. Not Putting In The Time. This is where a plan can be helpful. Plan your study time just as you plan your work for the week. Regular study, even 10 minutes a day, is better than nothing or trying to cram everything in on the weekend. Learning a language takes a lot of time and effort, and you should determine before buying any courses or embarking on any language-learning journey if you are up to the challenge. Language learning is not a big challenge all at once, but many small challenges spread over months and years.

5. Not Having A Study Buddy or Language Exchange Partner. You might not think of this as a mistake, but having someone else to ask you what you learned every week gives you more motivation to study. A study buddy is great if you can find someone else learning the same language that you are studying. But that's not always possible, and in those cases, I recommend that you try to find a language exchange partner who will write you regularly, ideally twice a week, but at least once a week. Also a language exchange partner will be able to help you by correcting your mistakes, recording audio files, and answering your questions.

Perhaps there are other mistakes that independent language learners make, but I think these are the most common. If you have an experience to share, please send me a message!